



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH POLICY & MANAGEMENT
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Dear Chairs Gilchrest and Lesser, Vice Chairs Gaston and Dathan, Ranking Members Seminara and Case, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Arturo Vargas Bustamante, Ph.D. I am Professor of Health Policy and Management at the University of California, Los Angeles Fielding School of Public Health and Director of Faculty Research at the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute. I am an expert in health policy, with specific training and expertise in health care disparities research, health care cost analysis, and health policy design, implementation, and evaluation. My research has been published in such prestigious health policy journals as *HEALTH AFFAIRS*, *HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH*, *SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MEDICINE*, *MEDICAL CARE*, and others.

I write to communicate my strong support for Proposed H.B. No. 5323 ("An Act Concerning the Expansion of Husky Health Benefits to All Income-Eligible Persons Regardless of Immigration Status). Connecticut should join its peer state of California in ensuring that all income-eligible state residents regardless of immigration status can access health care.

In 2016, California expanded Medicaid access to cover all income-eligible children up to age 18, regardless of immigration status.¹ In 2020, California then expanded Medicaid again to cover not only undocumented children, but also undocumented young adults up to age 25.² And in 2022, California expanded Medicaid once more to cover all income-eligible undocumented Californians 50 years of age and older.³ Beginning January 1, 2024, California is projected to eliminate immigration status as a consideration when deciding whether to cover all low-income Californian under Medicaid by expanding coverage to income eligible adults between ages 26 and 49.⁴

¹ Laurel Lucia, UC Berkeley Labor Center, *Towards Universal Health Coverage: Expanding Medi-Cal to Low-Income Undocumented Adults* p. 7 (2019), <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2019/Towards-Universal-Health-Coverage.pdf>.

² Adam Beam, AP News, *California first to cover health care for all immigrants* (2022), <https://apnews.com/article/health-california-immigration-gavin-newsom-medicare-b09edcb2b89ab041b520f431f8aab4b6>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

Connecticut should follow California's model and expand Medicaid to cover all income-eligible Connecticut residents regardless of immigration status. Recent empirical research into the cost of expanding Medicaid to cover all undocumented Connecticut residents has revealed that, in fact, such an expansion would largely pay for itself.

Using the RAND Corporation's COMPARE microsimulation model, RAND Corporation researchers last year found that “[e]nabling undocumented and legally present recent immigrant populations to enroll in Medicaid will increase total insurance enrollment among this population by approximately 21,400 individuals, or 43 percent, relative to current law.”⁵ Although the RAND report estimated that it would cost the State of Connecticut approximately \$83 million to expand Medicaid to cover all undocumented Connecticut residents, the report also indicated that “[s]avings to hospitals from reduced spending on uncompensated care could amount to roughly \$63 million to \$72 million.”⁶ The RAND report identified yet more savings from undocumented individuals’ decreased reliance on emergency Medicaid, which covers emergency care to income-eligible individuals regardless of immigration status. In 2021, Connecticut spent \$15 million on emergency Medicaid.⁷

The empirical research clearly suggests that the State of Connecticut would incur a minimal fiscal burden in expanding Medicaid to cover all otherwise income-eligible Connecticut residents—regardless of immigration status.

Connecticut should join its peer state of California in reducing the number of uninsured persons in the state. Therefore, I urge the members of the Human Services Committee to pass Proposed H.B. No. 5323.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arturo Vargas Bustamante', with a stylized, flowing script.

Arturo Vargas Bustamante, PhD, MPP
Professor of Health Policy & Management,
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Director of Faculty Research,
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⁵ Preethi Rao et al., Rand Corporation, *Expanding Insurance Coverage to Undocumented Immigrants in Connecticut* p. ix (2022), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1964-1.html.

⁶ *Id.* at p. x.

⁷ *Id.* at p. xi.